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LETTER DATED 27 FEBRUARY 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to forward on behalf of Chief Tom Ikimi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria and Chairman of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Committee of Five on Sierra Leone of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the text of a communiqué issued at the end of the ninth meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Committee of Five on Sierra Leone, held in Addis Ababa on 25 and 27 February 1998 (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ibrahim A. GAMBARI
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

Communiqué issued at the close of the Ninth Meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Committee of Five on Sierra Leone of the Economic Community of West African States, held in Addis Ababa on 25 and 27 February 1998

1. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Ministerial Committee of Five on Sierra Leone held its ninth meeting in Addis Ababa on 25 and 27 February 1998.

2. All members of the Committee were present: Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, Republic of Ghana, Republic of Guinea, Republic of Liberia, Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS and the representative of the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

3. Attending as observers were the Republic of Sierra Leone, represented by its Minister for Foreign Affairs, and the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General to Sierra Leone.

4. The Ministers considered the report of the Chairman of the Committee of Five on the fact-finding visit to Freetown and its environs, undertaken upon the instructions of the Chairman of ECOWAS, General Sani Abacha, in the company of the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, following the liberation of the city. They also considered the report of the Force Commander of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) on the situation in Sierra Leone.

5. The Ministers commended the two reports and noted that they were clear, frank and useful.

6. The Ministers reviewed the situation in Sierra Leone against the background of the reports and the recent developments in that country following the liberation of Freetown, its environs and a substantial part of the country, as well as the ouster of the illegal regime. They welcomed the return of normalcy to Freetown and its environs.

7. The Ministers noted that the recent military operations in Freetown were triggered by the unprovoked attacks on ECOMOG positions, which reached a climax on 5 February 1998. In the circumstance, ECOMOG had had no option but to defend itself in accordance with international rules of engagement for peacekeeping operations. They also noted with satisfaction that the military operations in Freetown had resulted in minimum loss of life and property. In this connection, they commended ECOMOG and its High Command for their bravery, gallantry and professionalism.

8. The Ministers realized the need for ECOMOG's capacity to be considerably enhanced to enable it effectively and successfully to carry out its mandate in Sierra Leone. In that regard, they noted that Nigeria and Guinea had recently deployed additional troops to ECOMOG operations in Sierra Leone. They called on those ECOWAS member States which had pledged troops for the operations in Sierra Leone to dispatch such troops urgently. They also called for the early

deployment of a United Nations military observer mission in Sierra Leone, alongside ECOMOG.

9. The Ministers noted that the ECOMOG High Command had produced a comprehensive list of ECOMOG personnel and logistic requirements in order to carry out its operations in Sierra Leone effectively. They called on members of the international community urgently to provide the needed assistance and logistic support on the basis of the list.

10. The Ministers noted that ECOMOG was presently holding a number of military and civilian detainees arising from its operations in Sierra Leone, including some senior members of the ousted junta. They also noted with satisfaction that the detainees were well looked after and had actually been visited by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

11. The Ministers affirmed the need for the early return of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah to Sierra Leone in an atmosphere of guaranteed safety and dignity. In that connection, they requested the Chairman of ECOWAS and Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS member States, the Chairman of OAU and chairmen of Africa's subregional organizations, the United Nations and other members of the international community to participate in the formal ceremony to mark President Tejan Kabbah's return to Sierra Leone on 10 March 1998.

12. The Ministers called on all Sierra Leoneans to heed the call for national reconciliation. They called in particular on all combatants to lay down their arms and to join the process of national reconstruction and development in order to ensure a speedy return of peace and security to the entire country.

13. The Ministers expressed the view that the Abidjan Agreement of 30 November 1996 and the Conakry Peace Plan of 23 October 1997 contained elements for the attainment of peace, stability and national reconciliation in Sierra Leone. They reviewed the Conakry Peace Plan against the background of recent developments and its three objectives, namely, the early reinstatement of the legitimate Government of President Tejan Kabbah; the return of peace and security; and the resolution of the issue of refugees and displaced persons. They noted that the objective of ECOWAS, OAU and the United Nations for the restoration of constitutional order and the reinstatement of the legitimate Government would be accomplished with the return of President Tejan Kabbah to Sierra Leone. They also expressed their readiness to cooperate with the Government of President Tejan Kabbah in the realization of these objectives. They also noted that ECOMOG would continue to play a major role in the restoration of peace and security to the country, in the immediate future.

14. The Ministers noted that the crisis in Sierra Leone had brought great suffering and hardship upon the people of that country and created colonies of refugees in ECOWAS member States, in particular in the neighbouring countries. They also noted that the ECOWAS secretariat, in collaboration with the United Nations and ECOMOG, had established a framework for the delivery of humanitarian assistance. They called on the international community urgently to provide the needed humanitarian and relief assistance through the established framework.

15. The Ministers decided to brief the Chairman of ECOWAS, the United Nations Secretary-General and the Security Council on the outcome of their deliberations.

16. The Ministers expressed their profound appreciation to the Government and people of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the Secretary-General of OAU and the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa for their hospitality and the excellent facilities placed at their disposal.